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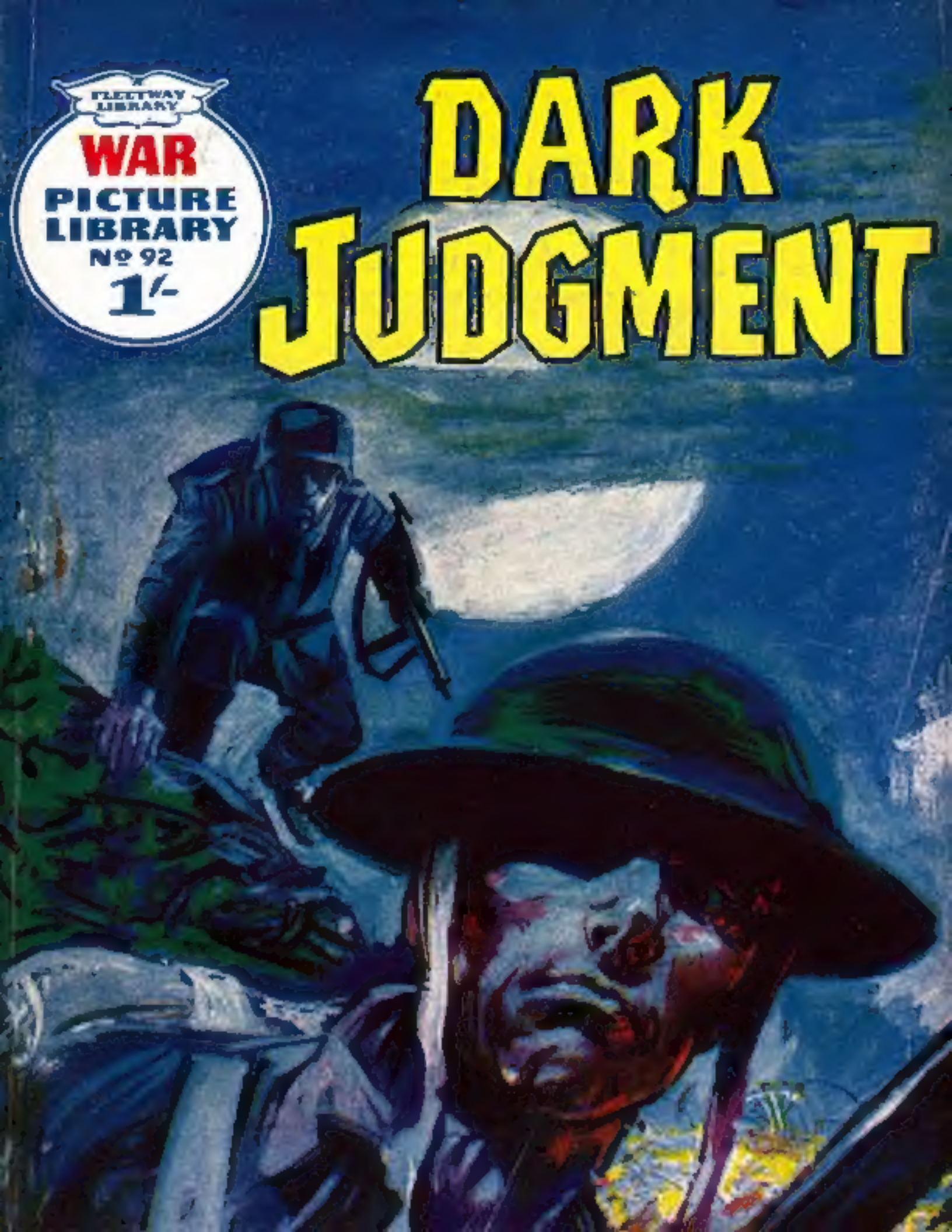

TENSE... TOUGH... TERRIFIC!

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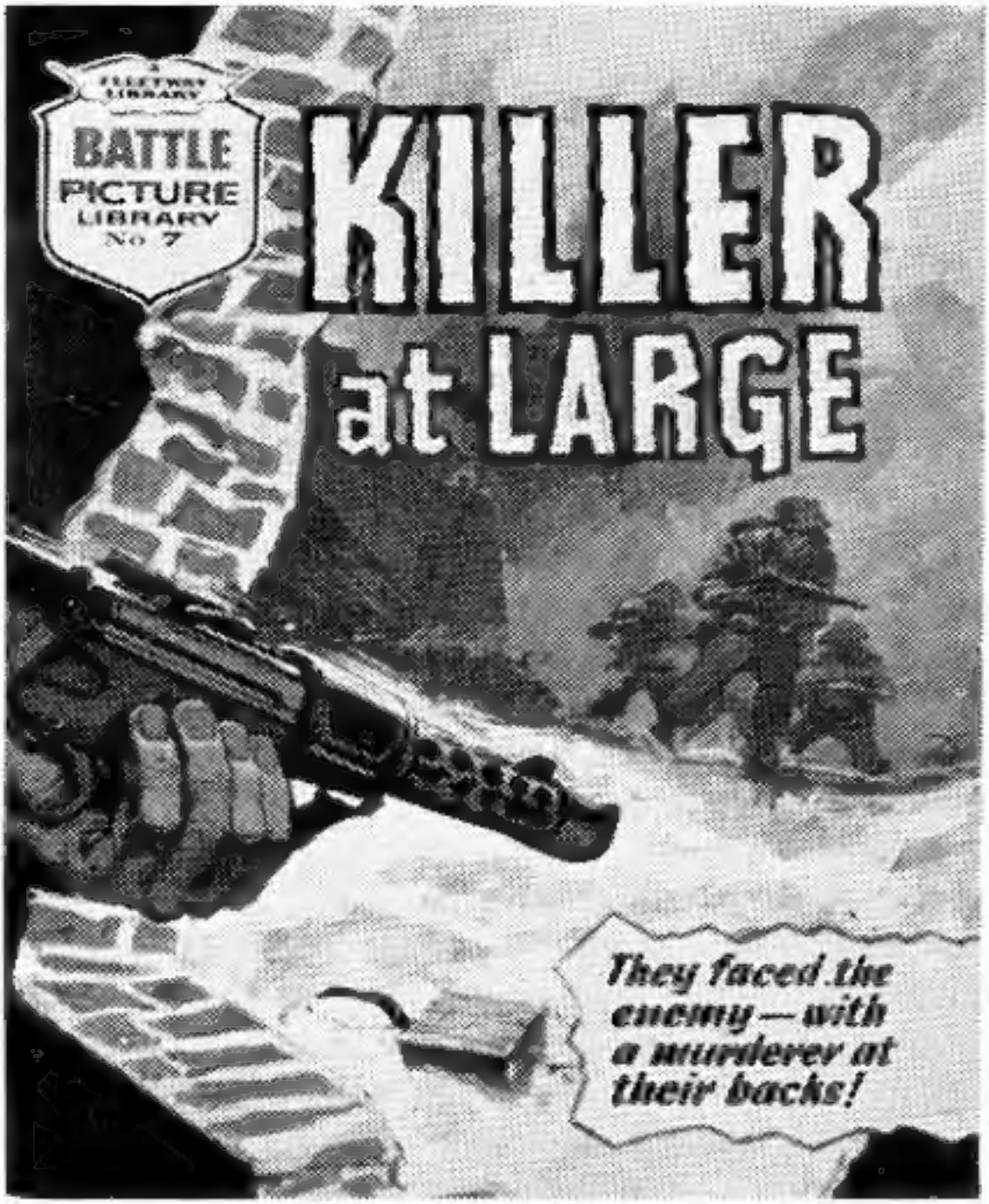
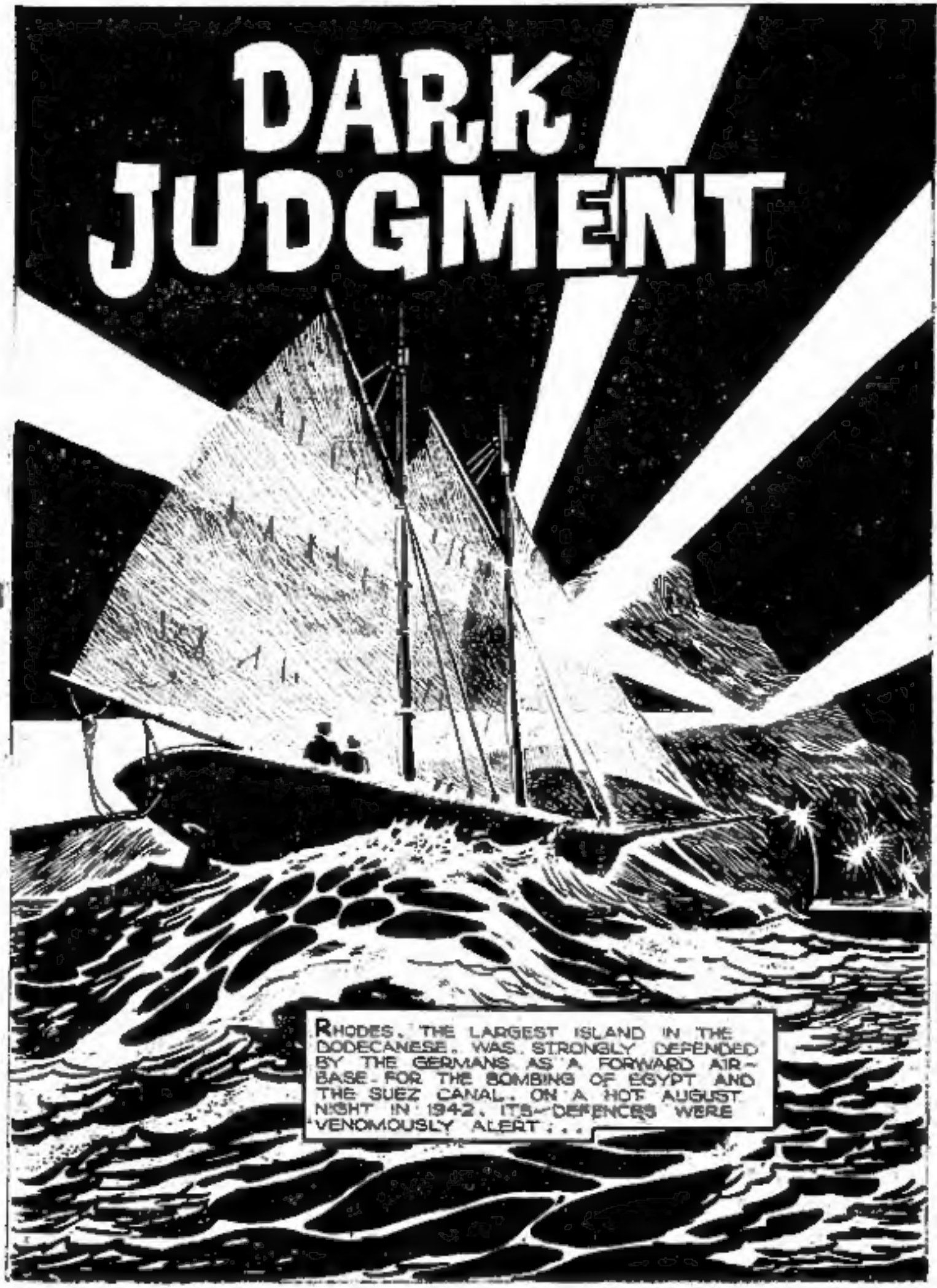


TWO Dramatic, All-action Issues Every Month

DARK JUDGMENT



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Chapter 1. ESCAPE IN DOUBT

THE TWO MEN HAD BROKEN OUT THAT NIGHT FROM THE PRISONER-OF-WAR TRANSIT CAMP AT LONGHI, TEN MILES INLAND. THEY HAD MET BEHIND BARBED WIRE ONLY A WEEK BEFORE. THEY KNEW EACH OTHER AS RICHARD HASLER, LIEUTENANT R.N.V.R., AND SAM TURNER, ABLE SEAMAN.

UNEASILY, THE BURLY ABLE SEAMAN FOLLOWED HIS SUPERIOR OFFICER. BEHIND THEM THE GERMAN GUNNERS WERE THROWING HIGH EXPLOSIVE AT EVERY MOVING SHADOW. IN FRONT OF THEM WERE THE SINISTER BLACK WATERS OF THE AEGEAN SEA . . .
NOW WHAT, SIR?
NOW WE SWIM, TURNER!

ABLE SEAMAN TURNER STARED AGHAST AT THE NAVAL LIEUTENANT. HE HAD NOT BARGAINED FOR THIS WHEN HE AGREED TO MAKE THE BREAK FROM CAPTIVITY.
YOU'RE CRAZY, SIR! SWIM? WHERE TO? WE'LL DROWN OUT THERE . . .
THE JERRIES HAVE GOT US CORNERED, TURNER! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY OUT AND I'D RATHER DROWN THAN LET THOSE JACKBOOTED THUGS PUT ME BACK BEHIND BARS! BUT WE SHAN'T DROWN . . . I KNOW WE SHAN'T DROWN . . .

THERE WAS A STRANGE CONFIDENCE IN LIEUTENANT HASLER'S VOICE AS HE PLUNGED INTO THE SURF, BUT IT DID NOT CONVINCE THE BURLY SEAMAN.
HERE GOES . . .
LUMME!

THE STARK WHITE-FINGERS OF THE GERMAN SEARCHLIGHTS WERE PROBING NEARER. SAM TURNER SWORE BITTERLY UNDER HIS BREATH...
COME ON, TURNER!
THIS IS AS CRAZY AS HELL, BUT I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO STAY WITH HIM!

ICY WATER GRIPPED AT THE BURLY SEAMAN'S BODY AS HE PLUNGED INTO THE SEA. ICY FEAR GRIPPED AT HIS NERVES...
CRAZY... CRAZY...

LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES AFTER THE TWO ESCAPEES HAD TAKEN TO THE WATER, JACKBOOTS WERE TRAMPLING THE SAND OF THE LITTLE BEACH...
ACH, SO! WE WILL SEND AN E-BOAT TO CHECK! SIGNAL THE COMMANDANT!

ON THE BEACH, THE GERMAN PATROL STAMPED HEAVILY AWAY. BUT HALF A MILE ACROSS THE COLD BLACK WATER, A NEW AND MORE SUBTLE ENEMY WAS GRIPPING THE ACHING LIMBS OF ABLE SEAMAN TURNER.
HELP... CRAMP... MY LEGS...
COMING, TURNER!

THE ARM WHICH SUPPORTED THE FRIGHTENED SEAMAN WAS STRONG AND THERE WAS A GRIM SHARPNESS IN LIEUTENANT HASLER'S VOICE. BUT SAM TURNER HAD SEEN SOMETHING ELSE BEYOND THE LIEUTENANT'S SHOULDER...
LOOK! I'M SEEING THINGS NOW...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT YOU WITH ME! GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF, MAN!

THEN LIEUTENANT HASLER ALSO GAVE AN EXCLAMATION. BOLD AGAINST THE MOONLIGHT, A STRANGE CRAFT WAS BEARING DOWN ON THE TWO MEN ...
YOU'RE NOT SEEING THINGS, TURNER! IT'S A CAIQUE! I TOLD YOU WE WOULDN'T DROWN...

THE CAIQUE, A TYPE OF MEDITERRANEAN FISHING BOAT, GLIDED TOWARDS THE TWO SHOUTING MEN. IT WAS AN ANCIENT CRAFT, BUT ITS MOTOR WAS BOTH QUIET AND POWERFUL ...
THE S.S.S... IT HAS TO BE THE S.S.S.

LIEUTENANT HASLER'S GUESS... IF IT WAS A GUESS... WAS A GOOD ONE. THE ANCIENT CRAFT WAS MANNED BY MEN OF THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION, THAT PIRATICAL BRITISH COMMANDO FORCE WHICH WAS THE SCOURGE OF THE GERMANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATRE IN WORLD WAR TWO.
I'M RIGHT, AREN'T I? YOU ARE THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION?
WELCOME ABOARD, MATE!

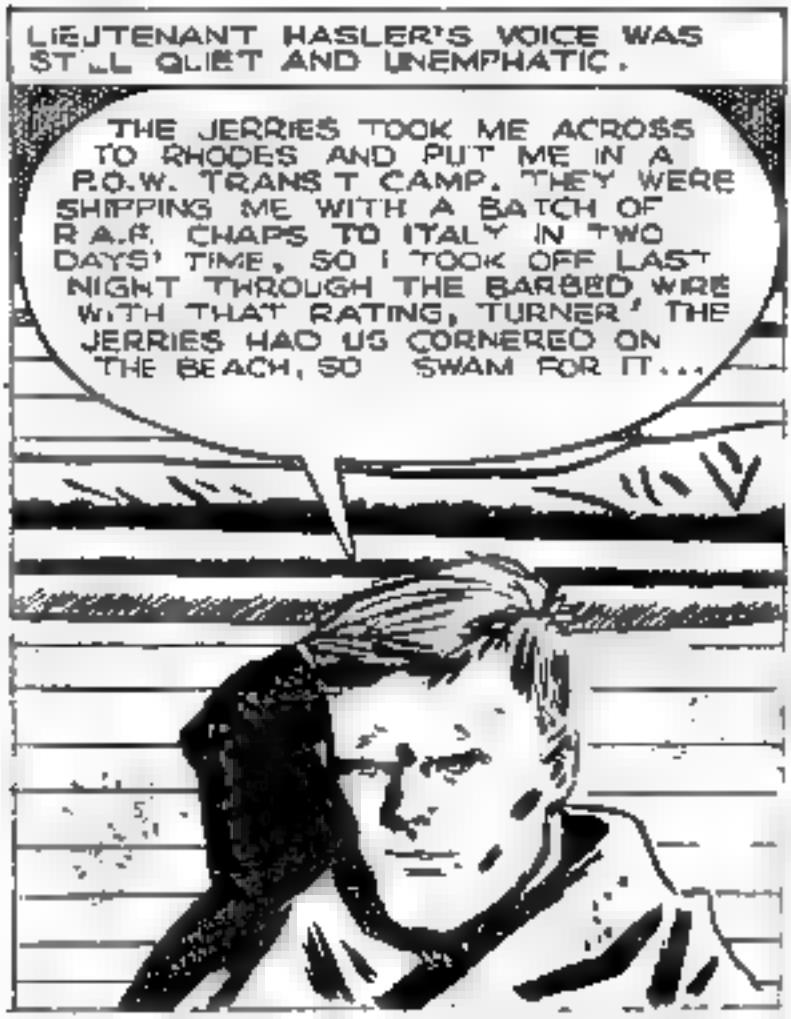
THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION HAD BEEN FORMED IN 1941. IT WAS A SMALL BUT DEADLY AMPHIBIOUS FORCE, EVERY MAN IN IT AN EXPERT IN THE USE OF CAIQUES, CANOES OR ANY OTHER HANDY VESSEL. THE GERMANS IN THE DODECANESE HAD GOOD REASON TO FEAR THESE SILENT RAIDERS FROM THE SEA.
YES, OLD MAN, YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU SEEM TO KNOW MORE ABOUT US THAN WE KNOW ABOUT YOU!
TAKE HIM TO THE CABIN, TOD! I'LL GIVE THE HELMSMAN NEW ORDERS!

MEN OF ALL THREE SERVICES FOUGHT WITH THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION. LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING WAS FROM THE ROYAL NAVY. THE LEADER OF THIS S.B.S. GROUP, WITH ITS BASE IN CYPRUS, WAS MAJOR ADAM PERRY, EX-HUSSAR, PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER AND AMATEUR YACHTSMAN.
AYE, AYE, SIR!
SET COURSE FOR BASE, WILDE, AND GIVE CASTLEROSSO A WIDE BERTH! JERRY SEEMS RATHER JUMPY TONIGHT!

IN THE CRAMPED CABIN OF THE CAIQUE, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING WAS ALREADY QUESTIONING THE NAVAL OFFICER... AND FROWNING AT THE ANSWERS...
YOU MEAN YOU SWAM OUT TO SEA ON THE OFF-CHANCE OF BEING PICKED UP?
NOT EVEN ON THE OFF-CHANCE, LIEUTENANT! I JUST SWAM!

LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER'S VOICE WAS QUIET, MATTER-OF-FACT. HIS COMPOSURE AS HE TALKED OF HIS INCREDIBLE ACTION STRUCK MAJOR PERRY AS HE ENTERED THE CABIN.
LOOK, SIR, THIS DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...
ALL RIGHT, TOD! LET'S BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING, SHALL WE... LIEUTENANT, IS IT?
YES, MAJOR! LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER, R.N.V.R. I WAS NAVIGATING OFFICER ON THE WINDRUSH!
THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE S.B.S. UNIT WATCHED THE MAN HE HAD RESCUED...
THE WINDRUSH, EH? SHE WAS DIVE-BOMBED OFF CRETE TWO MONTHS AGO, WASN'T SHE?
YES, MAJOR! SHE WENT DOWN IN THE CASO STRAITS TWO BOATLOADS OF SURVIVORS HEADED FOR CRETE, BUT I DIDN'T FANCY GIVING MYSELF UP, SO I SWAM THE OTHER WAY! I THOUGHT SOME OF THE SMALLER ISLANDS WOULD BE EMPTIER OF JERRIES!

MAJOR PERRY'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND WAS ALSO CAREFULLY LISTENING TO THE LIEUTENANT'S STORY .. BUT IN TOD FELDING'S EYES THERE WAS GROWING SUSPICION . . .
T WAS SCARPANTO ISLAND I REACHED FIRST' MEANT TO FIND A BOAT AND HEAD FOR TURKEY, BUT I STUMBLED ON A JERRY AIRFIELD INSTEAD AND WAS CAPTURED
A JERRY AIRFIELD ON SCARPANTO, EH? THAT'S NEWS TO ME' WELL, GO ON, LIEUTENANT . . .


LIEUTENANT HASLER'S VOICE WAS STILL QUIET AND UNEMPHATIC.
THE JERRIES TOOK ME ACROSS TO RHODES AND PUT ME IN A P.O.W. TRANSIT CAMP. THEY WERE SHIPPING ME WITH A BATCH OF R.A.F. CHAPS TO ITALY IN TWO DAYS' TIME, SO I TOOK OFF LAST NIGHT THROUGH THE BARBED WIRE WITH THAT RATING, TURNER' THE JERRIES HAD US CORNERED ON THE BEACH, SO SWAM FOR IT . . .

IT WAS THIS PART OF THE ESCAPEE'S STORY WHICH STUCK IN LIEUTENANT TOD FELDING'S THROAT . . .
YOU SWAM FOR IT, LIEUTENANT? AND WHAT WAS THE OBJECT OF THAT?
TO GET AWAY FROM THE GERMANS, MAJOR! SIMPLY THAT'
BUT THAT'S CRAZY! YOU COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN WE WERE LYING OFF-SHORE, TO PICK YOU UP' IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE'

FOR THE FIRST TIME, TENSION SHOWED IN LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER'S LEAN FACE.

IT'D MAKE SENSE TO YOU, LIEUTENANT, IF YOU'D EVER BEEN BEHIND BARBED WIRE... AND IF YOU HATED, THE GERMANS AS I HATE THEM HAD TO GET AWAY FROM THEM... THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT!

THE NAVAL OFFICER'S TENSE WORDS DID NOT CONVINCE TOD FIELDING, BUT MAJOR PERRY CHECKED HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND'S REPLY..

BUT I STILL SAY...

LET'S LEAVE THAT POINT FOR A MINUTE, TOD. I WANT TO TALK TO THE LIEUTENANT ABOUT THAT JERRY AIRFIELD HE RAN ACROSS ON SCARPANTO! IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH WE OUGHT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT!

THE S.B.S. COMMANDER WAS OBVIOUSLY PREPARED TO BELIEVE THE ESCAPEE'S STORY, BUT HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND WAS UNEASY.

NOW, LIEUTENANT, COULD YOU PUT YOUR FINGER ON THAT AIRFIELD?

LET ME SEE.. I LANDED ON THE WESTERN END OF THE ISLAND; THAT WOULD PUT ME ABOUT THERE! YES, THERE'S THE NARROW VALLEY I WALKED ALONG JUST BEFORE I STUMBLED ACROSS THE PERIMETER!

THEN TOD FIELDING WALKED UP ON DECK. HE WAS STILL CONSIDERING THE STRANGE STORY HE HAD JUST HEARD WHEN SERGEANT JOCK MARTIN, EX-R.A.F. AIR-SEA-RESCUE SERVICE, CAME SILENTLY TO HIS SIDE.

SIR! LOOKOUT REPORTS DIESEL ENGINES ON OUR PORT BEAM!

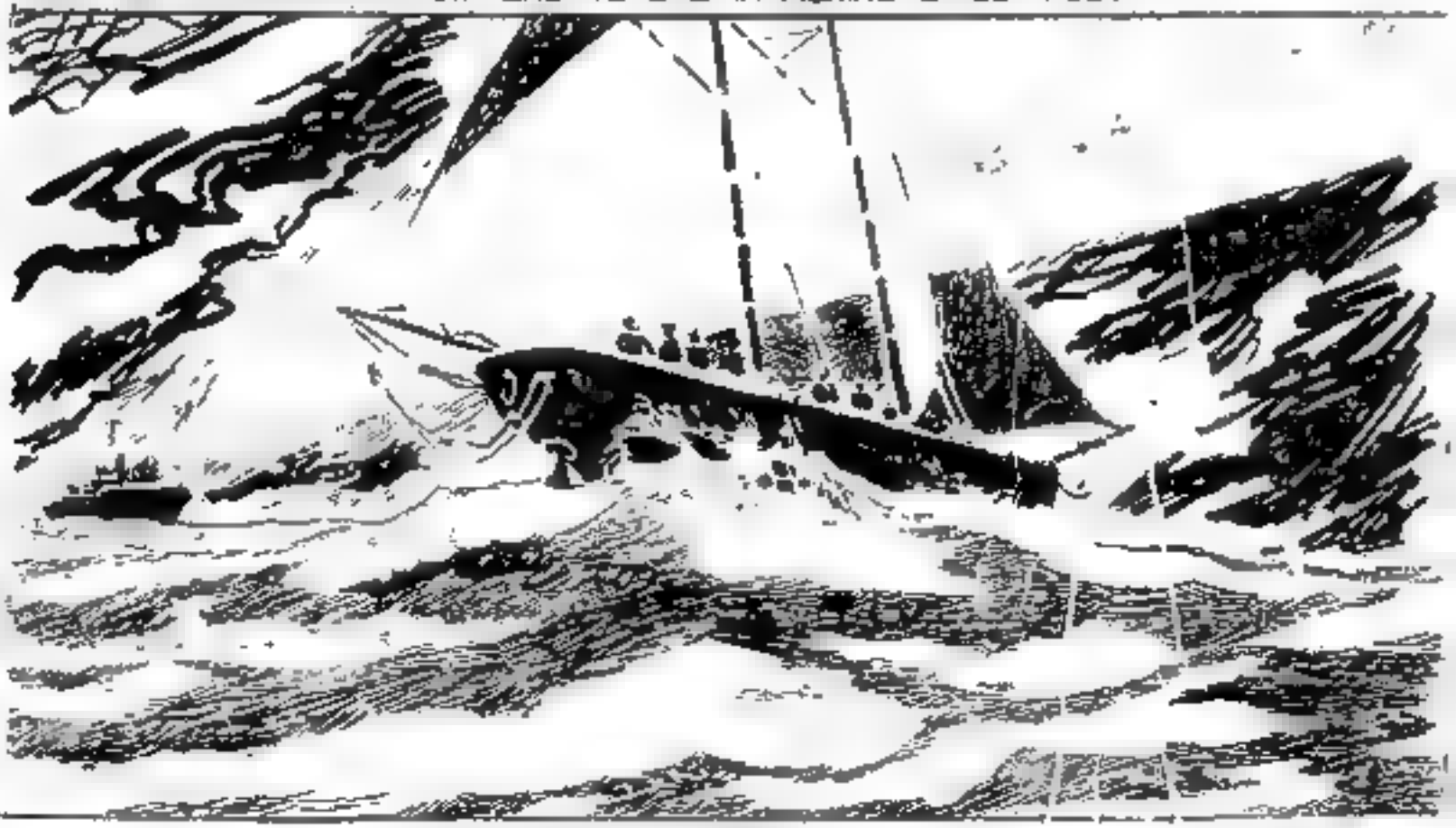
SUDDENLY ALERT TO THE NEW DANGER, TOD FIELDING HURRIED AFT WITH THE SERGEANT AT HIS ELBOW. AND EVEN AS HE PASSED THE CAIQUE'S WHEEL, A DARKER SHADOW DETACHED ITSELF FROM THE DARK HORIZON.

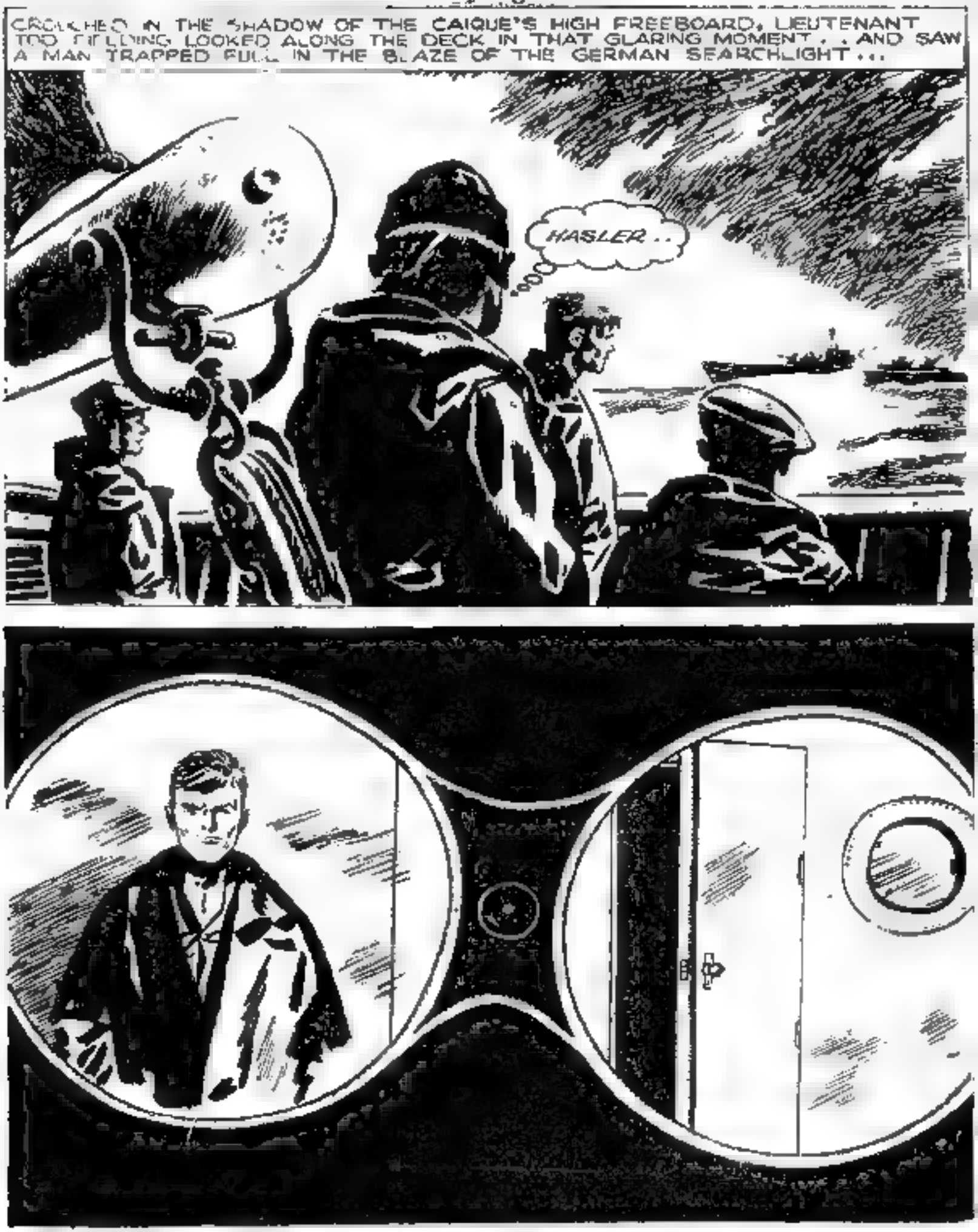
SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE E BOATS THE JERRIES HAVE AT RHODES, SIR! YES, THERE IT IS!

I SEE IT! CUT THE ENGINE, HELMSMAN! QUIET, EVERYBODY!

SILENTLY NOW, THE ANTIQUE CRAFT DRIFTED THROUGH THE DARKNESS. THE SINISTER THROB OF THE E BOAT'S POWERFUL ENGINES DREW CLOSER ON THE CAIQUE, GRIM MEN HELD THEIR BREATH ... AND THEIR FIRE ...

THE E-BOAT WAS NOW SO CLOSE THAT THE MEN ON THE CAIQUE HEARD THE HISS OF THE FILAMENTS AS THE GERMAN SEARCHLIGHT BLAZED. THE CAIQUE WAS LIT SUDDENLY FROM END TO END IN ACHING BRILLIANCE.




CROUCHED IN THE SHADOW OF THE CAIQUE'S HIGH FREEBOARD, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING LOOKED ALONG THE DECK IN THAT GLARING MOMENT . . AND SAW A MAN TRAPPED FULL IN THE BLAZE OF THE GERMAN SEARCHLIGHT . . .
HASLER . .

FOR FIVE TENSE SECONDS THE E-BOAT'S SEARCHLIGHT GLARED ON THE CAIQUE AND ON THE TAUT FIGURE OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER. THEN IT SWUNG AIMLESSLY AWAY TO THE DARKNESS ASTERN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE TONE OF THE E BOAT'S ENGINES CHANGED ...

E-BOAT'S TURNING AWAY, SIR, BY THE SOUND OF HER ENGINES!

THE SEARCHLIGHT'S LOST US, SIR! WHAT THE DEVIL IS JERRY PLAYING AT?

WAIT

THE THROB OF THE E BOAT'S ENGINES DWINDLED AWAY IN THE SUDDEN DARKNESS. IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THE WONDERING MEN OF THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION THAT THE GERMANS HAD SEEN THEIR QUEER CRAFT. WHY, THEN, HAD THEY TURNED AWAY?

SHE'S GONE, SIR! BLOW ME DOWN! JERRY MUST HAVE SEEN THE CAIQUE AND THEY KNOW WE USE CRAFT LIKE THIS FOR OUR RAIDS! YET THEY DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO CHALLENGE US! WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, SIR?

TOD FIELDING'S SUSPICIONS OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER HAD HARDENED INTO SOMETHING LIKE CERTAINTY.

MY GUESS IS THAT JERRY HAS SEEN ALL HE WANTS TO SEE, SERGEANT! WHAT DO YOU THINK, LIEUTENANT HASLER?

Chapter 2. SUSPICION

TOD FIELDING KEPT HIS SUSPICIONS TO HIMSELF ON THE WAY BACK TO THE S.B.S. BASE IN CYPRUS. THEY WERE TOO VAGUE .. HE NEEDED PROOF. BUT IT WAS MAJOR ADAM PERRY HIMSELF WHO TOLD HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND TO CHECK ON HASLER WITH NOAKES, THE NAVAL INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

AS TOD STEPPED THOUGHTFULLY INTO THE CORRIDOR, MAJOR ADAM PERRY CAME CASUALLY TOWARDS HIM FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE OPERATIONS ROOM.

TURNER! OF COURSE! PERHAPS HE CAN GIVE ME A SIDELINE ON HASLER'S BACKGROUND!

HALLO, TOD! DONE YOUR SLEUTHING?

C.O.H.Q. B.F.I.G. CMF

WITH A WARY GLANCE AT HIS COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUIET SMILE, TOD FIELDING FELL INTO STEP BESIDE HIM

I'M GETTING NOAKES TO CHECK ON HASLER, SIR!

FINE, TOO! WE'LL GET A REPLY IN A WEEK'S TIME. I'LL SAY THAT HASLER SERVED ON THE *WINDRUSH* AND WAS REPORTED MISSING! AND YOU'LL BE NO NEARER KNOWING WHETHER THAT HASLER IS OUR HASLER THAN YOU ARE NOW!

THERE WAS A COOL IRONY IN MAJOR PERRY'S VOICE.

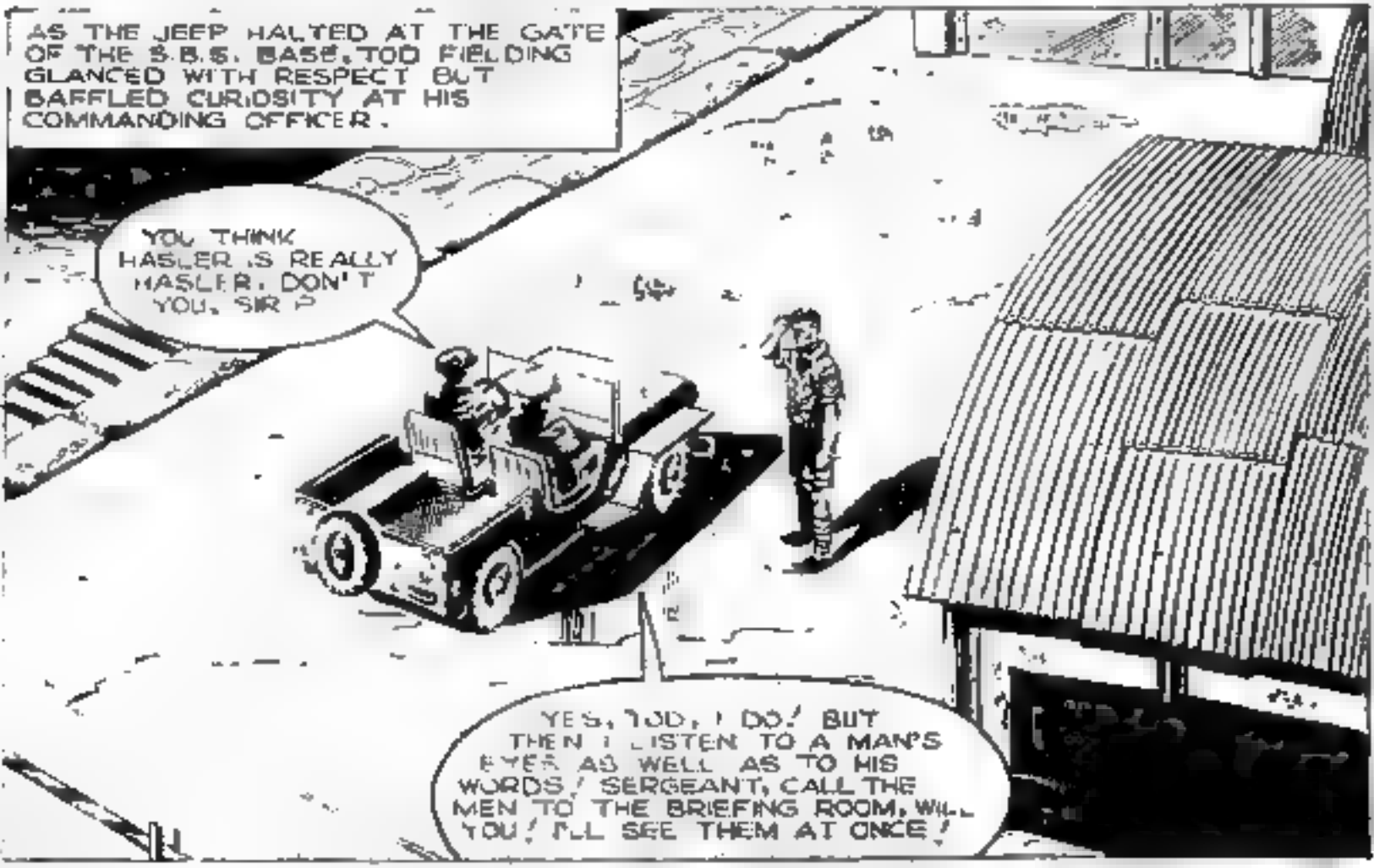
BUT THEY'LL GIVE US A DESCRIPTION, SIR!

OF COURSE! IT'LL FIT OUR HASLER LIKE A GLOVE! YOU DON'T THINK THE JERRIES WOULD SEND A MAN ACROSS TO IMPERSONATE ONE OF OUR OFFICERS WITHOUT MAKING SURE THAT HE LOOKED LIKE HIM. DO YOU ⊃ GIVE THEM SOME CREDIT FOR BRAINS, TOO!

THE MAJOR'S SUBTLE REASONING HAD BROUGHT A STUBBORN FROWN TO LEUTENANT FIELDING'S FACE.
BUT THERE MUST BE SOME WAY WE CAN CHECK ON THE MAN, SIR!
ROYAL NAVY
OH, THERE IS, TOO! A SIMPLE WAY, IF A BIT DRASTIC: I'M CALLING A MEETING FOR ALL OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE GROUP WHEN WE GET BACK! THAT WILL INCLUDE LIEJTENANT HASLER! I SHALL THEN BRIEF YOU ALL ON THE SCARPANTO AIRFIELD RAID WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE TONIGHT!

THE EFFECT OF THE MAJOR'S WORDS ON HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND WAS SHARP ENOUGH TO MAKE THE JEEP LURCH
SCARPANTO?! BUT HASLER GAVE YOU THAT INFORMATION HIMSELF!
EXACTLY, TOD! BY TOMORROW MORNING WE SHALL KNOW WHETHER MISTER HASLER CAN BE RELIED UPON OR NOT!

MAJOR ADAM PERRY OF THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION HAD HIS OWN UNCONVENTIONAL METHODS OF TESTING A MAN'S HONESTY...
AND IF HE CAN'T BE RELIED ON, SIR...
WE SHALL BE CLOBBERED, TOD! BUT IN THAT CASE WE SHALL BE ON OUR GUARD, WE SHALL BE FIGHTING JERRIES WHICH IS WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR, AND WE SHALL HAVE GAINED SOME VITAL INFORMATION! AND IF HASLER IS REALLY HASLER, WE SHALL BE WIPING OUT A JERRY AIRFIELD!
BEACH GROUPS
SPECIAL BOAT SECTION


AS THE JEEP HALTED AT THE GATE OF THE S.B.S. BASE, TOD FIELDING GLANCED WITH RESPECT BUT BAFFLED CURIOSITY AT HIS COMMANDING OFFICER.
YOU THINK HASLER IS REALLY HASLER, DON'T YOU, SIR?
YES, TOD, I DO! BUT THEN I LISTEN TO A MAN'S EYES AS WELL AS TO HIS WORDS! SERGEANT, CALL THE MEN TO THE BRIEFING ROOM, WILL YOU! I'LL SEE THEM AT ONCE!

Dark Judgment

LIEUTENANT OD FELL NA HAD BEEN IN MAJOR PERRY'S S.B.S GROUP FOR SIX MONTHS. HIS ADMIRATION FOR THE SUBTLE INTELLIGENCE AND COOL DARING OF HIS COMMANDER AMOUNTED ALMOST TO HERO WORSHIP. BUT THIS TIME HE COULD NOT AGREE WITH HIM . . .

ALL RIGHT, MEN! I WANT YOU TO LISTEN CAREFULLY. TONIGHT WE SHALL BE RAIDING A NEW ENEMY AIRFIELD IT IS LOCATED ON SCARPANTO!

MAJOR ADAM PERRY GAVE HIS MEN A SWIFT BUT COMPLETE PICTURE OF HIS PLANS FOR THE NIGHT RAID. HE OMITTED NO DETAIL, AND LISTENING TO THOSE VITAL FACTS WAS A SILENT MAN WITH A DARK INTENSE FACE. LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER.

. THE SUCCESS OF THIS RAID DEPENDS ON SECRECY! I RELY ON YOU ALL TO KEEP OUR PLANS TO YOURSELVES UNTIL YOU'RE ON BOARD THAT SUBMARINE TONIGHT.

TOD FELDING KEPT HIS EYES ON THE SUSPECT LIEUTENANT THROUGHOUT MAJOR PERRY'S BRIEFING. BUT IT WAS THE OTHER ESCAPEE HE SOUGHT OUT AFTERWARDS . . .
TURNER! I WANT A WORD WITH YOU!

CHEERFULLY, THE TOUGH ABLE SEAMAN FELL IN BESIDE THE S.B.S. LIEUTENANT. BEHIND THE TWO MEN, LEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER WATCHED THEM GO OFF TOGETHER WITH A FROWN ON HIS DARK FACE.
IF YOU CAN SPARE A MINUTE, TURNER, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.
RASC WD FLEET MESS
OH, I'M IN NO HURRY, SIR! I VOLUNTEERED TO COME ON THE PARTY TONIGHT, BUT THE MAJOR WANTS ME TO STAY BEHIND AND GET OVER THE EFFECTS OF THAT BLINKING MIDNIGHT BATHE I HAD!

THE SARCASM IN THE RATING'S VOICE GAVE TOD FIELDING THE CUE HE NEEDED. AS THE TWO MEN ENTERED THE LIEUTENANT'S ROOM, HE PUT THE FIRST VITAL QUESTION . . .

IT WASN'T YOUR IDEA TO SWIM FOR IT FROM THE BEACH THAT NIGHT, THEN?

MY IDEA, SIR? I'M NOT RAVING BONKERS, SIR

THE BURLY SEAMAN ANSWERED CHEERFULLY ENOUGH, BUT TOD FIELDING WAS NOT SMILING . . .

ALL RIGHT THEN, IT WAS LIEUTENANT HASLER'S IDEA! SO YOU THINK HE'S, ER . . . BONKERS?

NOW LOOK HERE, SIR, I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING AGAINST THE LIEUTENANT! I SUPPOSE HE HAD HIS REASONS . . .

THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE GRIMNESS IN LIEUTENANT FIELDING'S VOICE NOW. THE ABLE SEAMAN WATCHED HIS QUESTIONER SHREWDLY.

YES, TURNER, I'VE NO DOUBT LIEUTENANT HASLER DID HAVE HIS REASONS! HAVE YOU KNOWN HIM LONG?

JUST OVER ONE WEEK, SIR! I WAS A SURVIVOR FROM AN M.T.B., SIR. THE JERRIES PUT ME IN A HUT WITH LIEUTENANT HASLER — WE WERE THE ONLY NAVY BLOKES IN THE CAMP! HE SAID HE'D TAKE ME ALONG WITH HIM WHEN HE MADE A BREAK FOR IT!

DID YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE FROM THE JERRIES? WHEN YOU MADE THE BREAK, I MEAN?
NO, SIR! IT WAS QUEER, THAT! WE GOT OUT OVER THE WIRE, AND NO ONE LIFTED A FINGER TO STOP US! YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT THE LIEUTENANT HAD ARRANGED IT PERSONALLY! AND THERE WAS ANOTHER QUEER THING LATER, BUT THAT WAS NOTHING..
WHAT WAS IT?

WELL, SIR, LIEUTENANT HASLER SPEAKS GERMAN! ON OUR WAY FROM THE CAMP TO THE BEACH, WE STUMBLED INTO A JERRY SOLDIER ON A BICYCLE! WE GOT BEHIND A HEDGE PRETTY QUICK, BUT THE BLIGHTER CHALLENGED US! THE LIEUTENANT JABBERED AT HIM IN GERMAN... AND BLOW ME IF THE JERRY DIDN'T SLOPE OFF WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD! BUT IT'S PROBABLY NOT IMPORTANT, SIR...

LIEUTENANT FIELDING HAD LISTENED TO THE MATELOT'S STORY WITH A GRIM LIGHT IN HIS EYE. NOW HE GRABBED HIS CAP AND SHOWED SAM TURNER OUT OF THE ROOM.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, TURNER! WHAT YOU HAVE TOLD ME MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK! BUT KEEP IT TO YOURSELF, WILL YOU?
I'LL DO THAT, SIR! YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!

HIS MIND BITTERLY MADE UP, THE YOUNG OFFICER HURRIED ACROSS THE COMPOUND TO MAJOR ADAM PERRY'S HUT. WHEN HE OPENED THE DOOR, THE MAJOR WAS ALREADY ARMING HIMSELF FOR THE NIGHT'S WORK.
NOT READY YET, TOD?
NO, SIR! I'VE COME TO TELL YOU THAT WE OUGHT TO CANCEL THE RAID! THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF LIEUTENANT HASLER IS A GERMAN AGENT!

HIS GREY EYES COOL AND SHREWD, MAJOR ADAM PERRY LOOKED UP AT HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND
I SEE, TOD! YOU'VE PROOF OF THIS, I SUPPOSE?
WELL..., NOT PROOF, SIR! BUT I'VE BEEN QUESTIONING THAT ABLE SEAMAN, TURNER! HE'S GIVEN ME SOME HIGHLY INTERESTING FACTS! AMONG THEM, THE FACT THAT HASLER SPEAKS GERMAN!
PATHOS
CRETE
SEA

MAJOR PERRY'S VOICE WAS AS LAZY AND PRECISE AS THE CURL OF A WHIP.
IT MAY INTEREST YOU TO KNOW THAT I HAVE ALREADY QUESTIONED TURNER, TOD, AND LEARNED THE FACTS! IT MAY ALSO INTEREST YOU TO KNOW THAT I, TOO, SPEAK GERMAN! IT'S A USEFUL TALENT IN A SPECIAL BOAT SECTION OFFICER, JUST AS A COOL BRAIN IS! HAVE YOU ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY?

FOR ALL IT'S QUIET TONE, THE VOICE OF HIS COMMANDING OFFICER CUT INTO LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING'S PRIDE. HE REPLIED STIFFLY.

IF YOU'RE SATISFIED WITH HASLER... NO, SIR!

I DIDN'T SAY I WAS SATISFIED, TOD! I SAID I NEEDED PROOF! GET YOUR EQUIPMENT, THERE'S A GOOD CHAP, AND JOIN ME ON THE SUB!

SBS

BACK IN HIS OWN CABIN, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING BUCKLED ON HIS EQUIPMENT SAVAGELY. HE HAD ALREADY TRIED LIEUTENANT HASLER IN HIS OWN MIND... AND THE VERDICT WAS "GUILTY"...

FOR ONCE, THE MAJOR IS WRONG! AND I ONLY HOPE WE DON'T ALL HAVE TO DIE TO PROVE IT!

SBS

Chapter 3. AMBUSH

THE GUN WAS SINKING IN A BLOOD-RED SEA WHEN ONE OF H.M. SUBMARINES CLEARED THE WESTERN TIP OF CYPRUS THAT NIGHT AND DIVED. OILY WATER CLOSED OVER THE SLEEK, STEEL HULL. THE RAID ON SCARPANTO HAD BEGUN...

YAWNING, SOUR MOUTHED WITH NERVOUS TENSION, THE S.B.S. MEN STOOD READY AS THE SUBMARINE SURFACED. THE CONNING TOWER HATCH OPENED WITH A CLANG. THE FIRST CANOES DROPPED NOISELESSLY ON TO THE HEAVING, HOSTILE WATER...

THE MARKER CANOE HAD MADE A SILENT LANDFALL ON THE COAST OF ENEMY-HELD SCARPANTO. ONE BY ONE, THE OTHER CANOES GROUNDED GENTLY, LIKE SHADOWS, THE MEN CROUCHED AMONG THE SHARP ROCKS OF THE HOSTILE BEACH. MAJOR PERRY'S CANOE WAS LAST.

LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER'S VOICE WAS LOW BUT STEADY. THERE WAS NO TREMOR IN HIS HANDS AS HE HELPED THE MAJOR TO PULL THEIR CANOE FROM THE WATER. HE SEEMED NOT TO NOTICE THE GRIM GAZE OF LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING THAT NEVER LEFT HIM . . .

TOD! COME OVER HERE A MOMENT, WILL YOU?

MAJOR PERRY'S WORDS WERE BRIEF AND QUIET, BUT THEY BROUGHT A GRIN OF RELIEF TO HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND'S FACE. FOR THEY PROVED THAT, DESPITE HIS FAITH IN LIEUTENANT HASLER, THE S.B.S. COMMANDER HAD NO INTENTION OF BEING CAUGHT IN A TRAP . . .

YOU'LL TAKE THE SERGEANT AND TWELVE MEN, TOD, AND MOVE PARALLEL TO THE REST OF US A THOUSAND YARDS TO THE LEFT! HASLER WILL BE GUIDING MY PARTY TO THE AIRFIELD. IF THE JERRIES ARE WAITING FOR US ON HIS ROUTE, I'LL BLOW MY WHISTLE TWICE. YOU'LL MOVE IN AND TAKE THEM ON THE FLANK. GOT THAT?

LIKE SHADOWS, FOURTEEN MEN DETACHED THEMSELVES FROM THE GROUP ON THE BEACH AND MOVED OFF INTO THE HOSTILE DARKNESS. LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER WATCHED THEM GO.

READY, HASLER?

I'M READY, MAJOR.

TWO MEN MOVED OFF TO GUARD THE CANOES. SILENTLY, THE OTHERS FELL IN BEHIND HASLER AND THE MAJOR AND LOPED OFF UP THE STEEP BEACH. ONE THOUSAND YARDS TO THE LEFT, TOD FIELDING GAVE HIS MEN THE QUIET ORDER TO MARCH. THE LIVES OF THIRTY MEN WERE NOW IN THE HANDS OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER...

EVERY TRAINED SENSE OF MAJOR ADAM PERRY PROBED OUTWARDS INTO THE HOSTILE DARKNESS AROUND HIM. HE WAS AWARE OF THE SCRAPE OF A BOOT ON ROCK BEHIND HIM, THE SHAPE OF THE HEAPED SHADOWS AHEAD. BUT HIS EYES NEVER LEFT RICHARD HASLER'S BACK...

PERHAPS HASLER FELT THOSE IRON GREY EYES ON HIS BACK. THERE WAS A SHARP TENSION IN HIS FACE AS HE LED THE S.B.S. COLUMN INTO THE NARROW VALLEY...

THE LAST MAN IN MAJOR PERRY'S PARTY HAD ENTERED THE ROCKY JAWS OF THE VALLEY WHEN SHOTS RANG OUT WITH STUNNING SUDDENNESS.

ONE GERMAN SOLDIER HAD FIRED TOO SOON. THE TRAP HAD BEEN WELL LAID. NOW IT WAS SPRUNG AS THE ENEMY RIFLES BLAZED ALONG THE STONY RIDGE ABOVE THE VALLEY...

AIM WELL, MEN! THE BRITISH MUST NOT ESCAPE OUR TRAP BECAUSE ONE FOOL DISOBEYED MY ORDERS!

CORNERED IN THAT NARROW COFFIN OF A VALLEY, MAJOR ADAM PERRY PUT THE WHISTLE TO HIS LIPS, BLEW TWICE, AND BREATHED A QUIET PRAYER. HIS COOL EYES FLICKERED ACROSS TO LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER.

THIS MAN HAD LED THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION INTO THE VALLEY OF DEATH. ADAM PERRY WONDERED IF IT WAS AN EXPRESSION OF HATRED FOR THE GERMANS THAT TWISTED HASLER'S FACE... OR IF IT WERE FEAR!

WITH A BLOOD-CHILLING ROAR OF FURY, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING'S MEN BURST SUDDENLY OUT OF THE DARKNESS. MAJOR PERRY'S COUNTER-AMBUSH PLAN HAD CAUGHT THE GERMANS UNPREPARED...
SEE TO THIS LOT, MEN! THERE'S ONE MORE WHO BELONGS TO ME.

SECONDS LATER, TOD FIELDING SAW THE MAN HE WAS AFTER. LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER WAS RUNNING NOW TOWARDS THE BRITISH AND GERMANS STRUGGLING ON THE RIDGE. HE HAD THE SAME DESPERATE LOOK ON HIS DARK FACE, AND A GUN IN HIS HAND ...

THE FIRING HAD SLACKENED ALONG THE RIDGE AS THE SURVIVING GERMANS FLED INTO THE DARKNESS. TOD FIELDING CLOSED ON HIS QUARRY.

THE LIEUTENANT HAD REACHED HIS VERDICT SOME TIME AGO ON THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF RICHARD HASLER. NOW HE WAS READY TO PASS SENTENCE.

Chapter 4. COUNTER PLOT

THREE DAYS AFTER THE FAILURE OF THE SCARPANTO RAID, AN INFORMAL INQUIRY TOOK PLACE IN A SEALED ROOM AT NAVAL HEADQUARTERS IN CYPRUS.

IF MAJOR PERRY HADN'T ORDERED ME TO BRING LIEUTENANT HASLER BACK ALIVE, I SHOULD HAVE SHOT HIM ON THE ISLAND, SIR! SIX OF OUR MEN DIED IN THAT AMBUSH, AND THE REST OF US WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE WITH OUR LIVES! HASLER DID THAT!

YES, YES, LIEUTENANT! MAY WE HAVE THE OTHER POINTS YOU WISH TO MAKE CONCERNING LIEUTENANT HASLER?

STIFFLY, LIEUTENANT TOO FIELDING OUTLINED THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE NAVY LIEUTENANT. THERE WAS AN EXPRESSION OF UNWILLING AGREEMENT IN MAJOR ADAM PERRY'S FACE AS HE LISTENED . . .

VERY WELL, SIR! FIRST: ON THE NIGHT WE PICKED UP HASLER, THE JERRIES WERE BLAZING AWAY WITH EVERY GUN AND SHINING EVERY SEARCHLIGHT ON THAT PART OF THE COAST WOULD THEY DO THAT JUST TO CATCH TWO MISERABLE PRISONERS? IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE SENSE . . . *UNLESS THEY [redacted] MAKING THAT RACKET TO ATTRACT AN S.B.S. BOAT LIKE OURS TO THE SPOT!*

REMORSELESSLY, TOD FIELDING WENT ON .
SECOND THE E-BOAT WHICH BUZZED US THAT NIGHT SHEERED OFF WITHOUT EVEN CHALLENGING US! OBVIOUSLY THEY WANTED TO CHECK THAT HASLER HAD SUCCESSFULLY PLANTED HIMSELF ABOARD AN S.B.S. CRAFT! WHEN THEY SAW HIM IN THE GLARE OF THE SEARCHLIGHT, THEY PRETENDED TO HAVE NO INTEREST IN OUR CAIQUE AND CLEARED OFF!
ONLY WHEN THE LIEUTENANT REACHED HIS FOURTH POINT DID MAJOR ADAM PERRY TAKE HIS GAZE FROM THE CEILING . . .
THIRD, HASLER SPEAKS GERMAN! FOURTH, AND THE MOST DAMNING POINT OF ALL! HASLER SWAM OUT FROM THAT BEACH AT RHODES! HE PRACTICALLY COMMITTED SUICIDE, AND HE CLAIMS HE DID THAT SIMPLY TO ESCAPE FROM THE GERMANS! ISN'T IT MORE LIKELY THAT HE KNEW AN S.B.S. BOAT WOULD BE THERE TO PICK HIM UP BECAUSE THE GERMANS HAD PLANNED TO PLANT HIM ABOARD US THAT WAY?

LIEUTENANT FIELDING'S VOICE ROSE THE THREE SENIOR OFFICERS STIRRED... AND NODDED GRIMLY...
I SAY THAT RICHARD HASLER IS AN ENEMY AGENT!
THE EVIDENCE SEEMS PRETTY CONCLUSIVE, DON'T YOU THINK, GENTLEMEN?
THE LIEUTENANT IS RIGHT! THE MAN'S A SPY!

WITH A SOMBRE FACE, THE ADMIRAL TURNED TO MAJOR ADAM PERRY...
WHAT DO YOU THINK, PERRY? WE MUST HAVE MAXIMUM SECURITY FOR THAT RAID YOUR CHAPS ARE MAKING TOMORROW NIGHT ON THE AMMO SHIPS IN RHODES HARBOUR, EH?
TRUE, SIR ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MUST ALSO BLOW THOSE SHIPS UP...

A SARDONIC SMILE TWISTED THE CORNERS OF THE MAJOR'S MOUTH...
...IN VIEW OF THAT, SIR, I MUST SAY I THINK IT WOULD BE AN AWFUL WASTE OF LIEUTENANT HASLER TO SHOOT HIM!

WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU MEAN, PERRY?
I MEAN, SIR, THAT LIEUTENANT HASLER'S CORPSE WILL BE A DEAD LOSS TO US, LITERALLY! BUT LIEUTENANT HASLER ALIVE -- NOW WE KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO -- COULD MAKE A VERY JOLLY LITTLE DECOY DUCK TO TRICK THE GERMANS!
SLOW SMILES BROKE OUT ON THE GRIM FACES OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS.
BY HEAVENS, PERRY, I THINK YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING THERE!
VERY NEAT.
WELL, GENTLEMEN DO YOU THINK YOU CAN LEAVE MISTER HASLER TO ME?

THE BRILLIANT EXPLOITS OF THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION UNIT IN CYPRUS HAD GIVEN THE SENIOR NAVAL OFFICERS THERE A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR THE ABILITIES OF MAJOR ADAM PERRY, ITS LEADER .
ALL RIGHT, PERRY,! WE KNOW YOU LIKE TO WORK ON YOUR OWN! AND AFTER ALL, HASLER IS THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION'S PIGEON! HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY!
THANK YOU, SIR!

OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE ROOM, TOD FIELDING TURNED AWKWARDLY TO MAJOR PERRY
I'M SORRY, SIR! I'VE JUST REMEMBERED WHAT YOU TOLD ME WHEN I JOINED THE S.B.S. — 'WE NEED MEN WITH BRAINS AS WELL AS BRAWN'. I'M AFRAID I'VE BEEN A BIT OF A CLOT...
FORGET IT, TOD! THE WAY YOU MARSHALLED THE EVIDENCE AGAINST HASLER WAS FIRST CLASS! LET'S GO AND SEE OUR TAME SPY, SHALL WE?

AFTER THE SOMBRE RETURN FROM THE UNSUCCESSFUL RAID ON SCARPANTO, LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER HAD BEEN PUT UNDER ARMED GUARD AT NAVAL HEADQUARTERS. HE LOOKED UP SAVAGELY AS THE TWO S.B.S OFFICERS ENTERED THE ROOM...
AH, HASLER...
WHEN DO THEY SHOOT ME, MAJOR? AT DAWN?

BUT MAJOR PERRY ANSWERED HIM QUIETLY...
THEY WON'T SHOOT YOU, HASLER! AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY AGREE WITH ME THAT THE EVIDENCE AGAINST YOU IS INCONCLUSIVE ISN'T THAT SO, FIELDING?
ER... YES, SIR! YES, OF COURSE, SIR!

THE EYES OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER WIDENED. WARILY, HE LOOKED INTO THE COOL FACE OF THE S.B.S. COMMANDER.
YOU MEAN. .
I MEAN THAT THIS SCARPANTO BUSINESS WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS! WE ALL REALISE THAT NOW! I BELIEVE YOU'RE THE SORT OF MAN WE NEED IN THE S.B.S., HASLER, AND AS A MEASURE OF MY CONFIDENCE IN YOU, I'M SELECTING YOU FOR A VITAL MISSION!

LIEUTENANT HASLER DID NOT SMILE, BUT HIS DARK EYES GLEAMED EAGERLY...
YOU WON'T REGRET THIS, MAJOR, I PROMISE YOU
I'M SURE I WON'T, LIEUTENANT HASLER! NOW LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. TOMORROW NIGHT, WE'RE RAIDING THE HARBOUR AT RHODES! TWO GERMAN AMMUNITION SHIPS ARE LOADING THERE BEFORE SAILING TO TUNIS WITH AMMUNITION FOR ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS! T'S OUR JOB TO BLOW THOSE SHIPS SKY-HIGH!

LISTENING TO THE MATTER-OF-FACT TONE OF HIS COMMANDER, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING ALMOST BELIEVED IN THE PLAN HIMSELF--
THE JERRIES WILL BE GUARDING THE SEA APPROACHES TO RHODES HARBOUR. SO WE SHALL BEACH OUR CANOES SIX MILES TO THE EAST AND SLIP IN BEHIND THE JERRY DEFENCES! THE TRICKY PART IS GOING TO BE THE LANDING ON THAT COAST IN DARKNESS! THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN, HASLER.

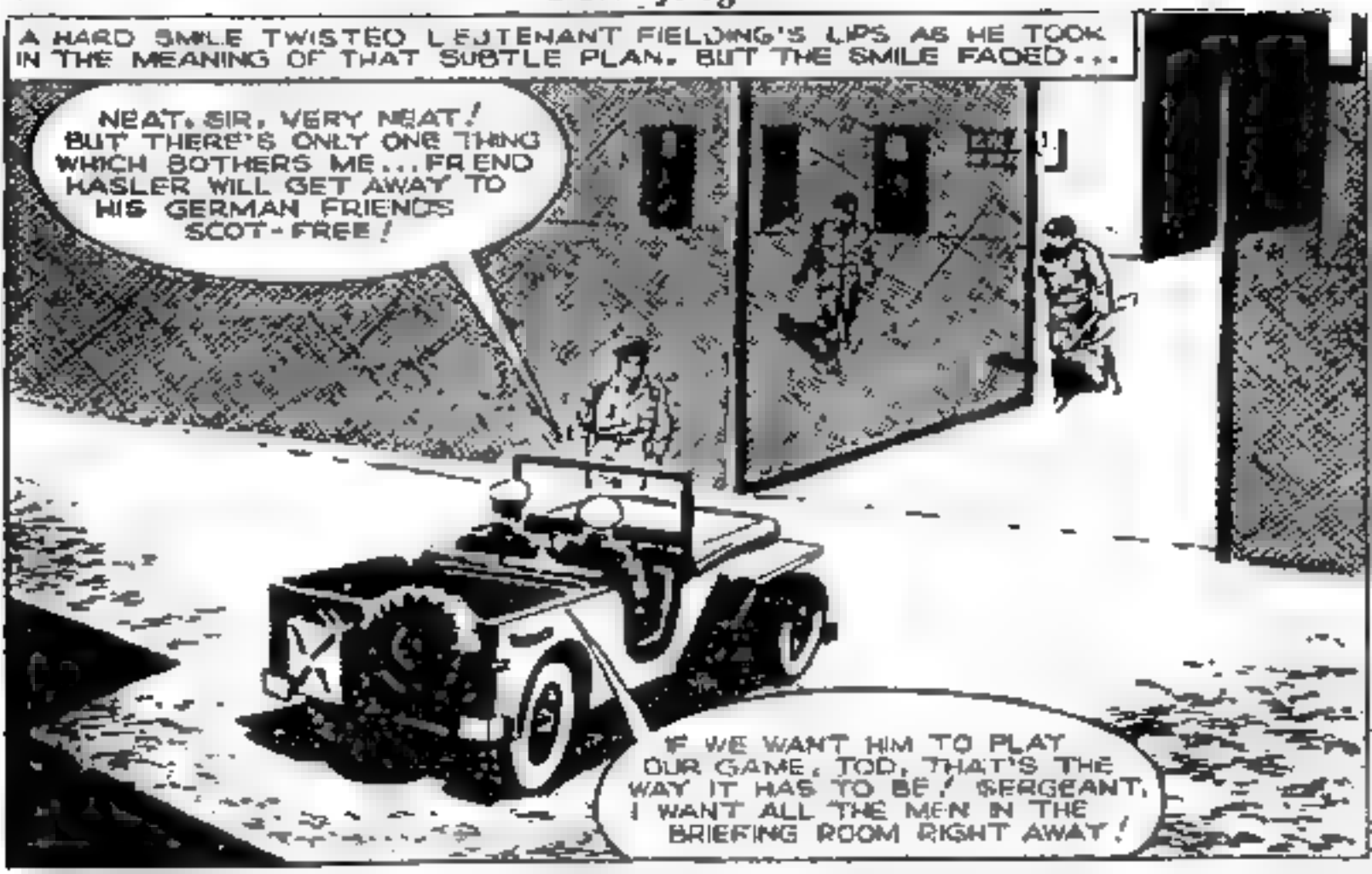
THERE'S ONLY ONE SPOT ON THAT TREACHEROUS COAST WHERE CANOES CAN BEACH SAFELY! I WANT A SINGLE MAN TO GO IN ALONE IN DAYLIGHT! HE'LL HIDE UP UNTIL IT'S DARK AND AT MIDNIGHT, HE'LL SHOW A LIGHT TO SEAWARD AS A MARKER FOR THE REST OF US!
AND THAT MAN...

COOLLY, WITHOUT A FLICKER OF EMOTION, ADAM PERRY LAID THE FOUNDATION OF HIS COUNTER-ESPIONAGE PLAN..
THE MAN IS YOU, HASLER! IF YOU FAIL...IF THE LIGHT'S IN THE WRONG PLACE, OR THE JERRIES ARE THERE TO MEET US...THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION UNIT IN CYPRUS WILL BE WIPED OUT!
THE LIGHT WILL BE THERE, SIR! I PROMISE YOU THAT!

THOSE WORDS OF HASLER'S, SO FERVENT AND APPARENTLY SINCERE, SENT A HOT RAGE THROUGH TOD FIELDING'S HEART. THIS MAN WAS A SPY. ALREADY HE WOULD BE GLOATING OVER HIS CHANCE TO BETRAY THIRTY BRAVE MEN.
I'LL ARRANGE FOR A CAR TO PICK YOU UP INSIDE THE HOUR. HASLER! WE'LL GO OVER THE MAPS TOGETHER! YOU LEAVE AT NOON TOMORROW, SO THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME!
OUTSIDE THE ROOM FIELDING SPOKE ADMIRINGLY...
YOU PUT THAT OVER BRILLIANTLY, MAJOR!
I DID, DION T!! THE ODD THING WAS, I ALMOST FOUND MYSELF BELIEVING IT, I MEAN, ABOUT MY HAVING FAITH IN HASLER! YOU KNOW, I CAN'T HELP WONDERING...

THERE WAS A STRANGE DOUBT IN MAJOR PERRY'S SENSITIVE FACE, BUT IT CLEARED RELUCTANTLY AT TOD FIELDING'S HEATED WORDS...
HASLER'S AN ENEMY AGENT, SIR! A DIRTY, TREACHEROUS SPY! HE'S RUBBING HIS HANDS RIGHT NOW AT THE THOUGHT OF BETRAYING US TO THE GERMANS!
YES, TOD, OF COURSE YOU'RE RIGHT! WITH ALL THE EVIDENCE WE'VE GOT, HE MUST BE A SPY! WELL, THIS TIME AT LEAST HE'S REALLY GOING TO WORK FOR US

THE GERMANS HAD MADE THE FIRST MOVE IN A DEADLY BATTLE OF WITS. NOW THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION HAD ITS COUNTER-MOVE READY...
YOU SEE, TOD, WE'RE GOING TO ATTACK THOSE AMMO SHIPS DIRECT FROM THE SEA AFTER ALL! WHEN MISTER HASLER TELLS THE JERRIES ALL ABOUT OUR FAKE PLAN, THEY'LL BE SITTING WAITING FOR US SIX MILES AWAY ALONG THE COAST!


A HARD SMILE TWISTED LIEUTENANT FIELDING'S LIPS AS HE TOOK IN THE MEANING OF THAT SUBTLE PLAN. BUT THE SMILE FADED...
NEAT, SIR, VERY NEAT! BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WHICH BOTHERS ME... FRIEND HASLER WILL GET AWAY TO HIS GERMAN FRIENDS SCOT-FREE!
IF WE WANT HIM TO PLAY OUR GAME, TOD, THAT'S THE WAY IT HAS TO BE! SERGEANT, I WANT ALL THE MEN IN THE BRIEFING ROOM RIGHT AWAY!

WHILE THE MAJOR WENT TO HIS OFFICE TO COLLECT MAPS AND THE LOUD-HAILER SUMMONED THE S.B.S. MEN TO THE BRIEFING ROOM, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING THOUGHT FAST. WHEN ADAM PERRY REJOINED HIM AT THE DOOR OF THE BRIEFING ROOM...
I SHALL HAVE TO TELL THE MEN THE TRUTH ABOUT HASLER AND OUR PLAN, TOD! THEY FEEL PRETTY MURDEROUS ABOUT HIM AND I DON'T BLAME THEM! WE DON'T WANT HIM KNOCKED OFF BEFORE HE CAN DO HIS STUFF!
NO, SIR BUT WHAT ABOUT AFTER HE'S DONE HIS STUFF?

PERRY LOOKED CURIOUSLY AT HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND THERE WAS A DEADLY INTENTNESS IN THAT FRANK YOUNG FACE.
LET ME GO IN ALONE TO THE BEACH WHERE HASLER WILL BE WAITING TOMORROW NIGHT, SIR! WITH LUCK I'LL BE ABLE TO BRING HIM BACK TO FACE A FIRING SQUAD! IF THE JERRIES ARE TOO QUICK FOR ME.. AT LEAST, I'LL TAKE THE TREACHEROUS SWINE WITH ME!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, TOD?

IT WAS A STRANGE REQUEST, AND A DARING ONE... BUT THEY WERE BOTH OFFICERS IN THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION.
ALL RIGHT, TOD. IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, GO IN AND GET THE HARD PROOF AND THE SPY..

Chapter 5. SPY UNMASKED

THE MEN OF THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION WERE FILING ABOARD THE FAST LAUNCHES THAT WOULD CARRY THEM TO RHODES AS TOD FIELDING REACHED THE JETTY.
TOD! BEFORE YOU GO...

MAJOR ADAM PERRY PUSHED A PACKAGE INTO TOD'S HANDS AND GRINNED...
THE INTELLIGENCE BODS HAVE JUST TOLD ME THAT THERE IS AN ENEMY AIRFIELD ON SCARPANTO, TOD, AFTER ALL! KASLER WAS TELLING US THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT, AT LEAST! HERE, TAKE THIS — YOU MAY NEED IT!

A FEW MOMENTS LATER, TOO FIELDING OPENED THE PACKAGE . . . AND FROWNED. AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE SKIPPER OF THE M.T.B. TURNED HIS HEAD AND ASKED A BOMBSHELL OF A QUESTION . . .
LIMPET BOMBS! WHAT THE DEVIL DOES THE OLD MAN THINK I'LL NEED THESE FOR?
THE MAJOR MENTIONED A CHAP CALLED HASLER! THAT WOULDN'T BE DICKY HASLER, WOULD IT?

THE CHEERFUL WORDS BROUGHT TOO FIELDING'S HEAD UP WITH A SNAP.
LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER, R.N.V.R! YOU DON'T KNOW HIM, DO YOU?
OF COURSE I KNOW OLD DICKY! WE TRAINED TOGETHER LAST HEARD HE WAS NAVIGATOR ON THE *WINDRUSH*! THAT'S YOUR MAN ISN'T IT — UNLESS THERE ARE TWO OF THEM

THE MOTOR TORPEDO BOAT WAS ALREADY CARRYING FIELDING ACROSS THE WAVES, TO HIS STRANGE APPOINTMENT WITH A SPY — IF HASLER WAS A SPY!

"THAT'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN WONDERING, LIEUTENANT — WHETHER THERE ARE TWO OF THEM! YOU COULDN'T DESCRIBE THIS FRIEND OF YOURS, COULD YOU?

I CAN DO BETTER! I CAN SHOW YOU A PHOTOGRAPH! HOLD ON!

HIS HEART THUMPING, TOD FIELDING TOOK THE PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE LIEUTENANT'S HAND. ALMOST FEARFULLY HE LOOKED AT IT . . .

YES, OLD DICKY HASLER WAS A LAD! HOW HE HATED THE JERRIES! HE'D LIVED IN GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR, SPOKE THE LANGUAGE, TOO! APPARENTLY HE WAS ENGAGED TO A JEWISH GIRL AND THE JERRIES SENT HER TO A CONCENTRATION CAMP . . NO WONDER HE HATED THEM!

THE MAN SMILING IN THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS CERTAINLY RICHARD HASLER. ALL THROUGH THE LONG HOURS OF THAT VOYAGE TO RHODES, TOD FIELDING THOUGHT OF THE YOUNG NAVAL LIEUTENANT'S WORDS AND WONDERED . . .

AT MIDNIGHT. FIELDING WAS HELPED OVER THE SIDE OF THE TORPEDO BOAT TO HIS CANOE. THE COAST OF RHODES LOOMED THROUGH THE DARKNESS HALF A MILE AWAY ON THE STARBOARD BOW. THERE WAS A GUN IN THE LIEUTENANT'S HOLSTER... A PHOTOGRAPH IN HIS POCKET... AND A TERRIBLE DOUBT IN HIS HEART...

SOON HE COULD SEE THE PINPOINT OF LIGHT WHICH WAS THE TORCH MARKER. HE NO LONGER KNEW WHETHER THAT TORCH WAS HELD BY A SPY OR BY A LOYAL AND DARING OFFICER... BUT HE WOULD FIND OUT...

AS THE CANOE GROUNDED GENTLY TWENTY YARDS FROM THE MARKER LIGHT, TOD FIELDING WAS ON HIS OWN...

SLOWLY, WITH HIS FINGERS TOUCHING THE BUTT OF THE PISTOL AT HIS BELT, TOO FIELDING COVERED THE TWENTY YARDS BETWEEN HIS CANOE AND THE MARKER LIGHT. HE WAS THREE YARDS AWAY, WHEN THE TORCH BLAZED IN HIS FACE AND THE VOICE OF RICHARD HASLER CHALLENGED HIM.

FOR THREE LONG SECONDS, RICHARD HASLER STARED AT THE LIEUTENANT IN TENSE SILENCE. THEN HE CALLED OUT HOARSELY, THE TORCH DROPPED FROM HIS RIGHT HAND, AND HIS LEFT WHIPPED UPWARD WITH THE TOMMY GUN IN IT. FIELDING WENT FOR HIS PISTOL ...

TOO FIELDING WAS STILL FUMBLING FRANTICALLY FOR HIS PISTOL WHEN RICHARD HASLER'S TOMMY GUN SLASHED THE DARKNESS APART WITH A LONG SAVAGE BURST...

BUT THE BULLETS RIPPED PAST THE DESPERATE TOD FIELDING... AND THEY HIT THEIR MARK...

BEWILDERED, TOD TURNED TO LOOK BEHIND HIM... IN TIME TO SEE THE GRIM AND DEADLY PROOF THAT LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER WAS NO ENEMY AGENT...
GOOD GRIEF!

THERE WERE ONLY SIX MEN IN THAT GERMAN PATROL. THEY WERE SIX DEAD MEN WHEN THE CLEAR QUIET VOICE OF LIEUTENANT HASLER BROKE THE SHOCKED SILENCE AGAIN.
WELL, FIELDING, WHY ARE YOU ALONE?
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE AN ENEMY AGENT, HASLER! WE SENT YOU HERE AS A DECOY TO DRAW THE GERMANS AWAY FROM THE HARBOUR ITSELF! THAT'S WHERE THE MAJOR'S GOING IN, DIRECT FROM THE SEA!

EVEN AS TOD FIELDING SPOKE, THE THUNDER OF HEAVY NAVAL GUNS ROLLED ACROSS SIX MILES OF WILD COASTLINE TO THE EARS OF THE TWO MEN. THEY TURNED. THE WESTERN SKY WAS ABLAZE WITH FLARES AND SEARCHLIGHTS ...
THE MAJOR'S HAVING A ROUGH TIME FROM THE LOOK OF IT!
THE JERRIES MUST HAVE KNOWN ABOUT HIS REAL PLANS THAT'S WHY THEY ONLY SENT A SMALL PATROL HERE TO PICK YOU UP! THEIR MAIN DEFENCES WERE ALL READY AND WAITING FOR HIM AT RHODES HARBOUR! BUT IF YOU'RE NOT THE REAL SPY ...

LIEUTENANT HASLER'S VOICE WAS DRY AND CAUSTIC BUT HIS WORDS SHOOK TOD FIELDING... AND SENT HIS HANDS GROPING FOR THE PACK MAJOR PERRY HAD GIVEN HIM AT THE LAST MOMENT ON THE JETTY IN CYPRUS!
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO PROVE IT, FIELDING? BLOW UP THOSE AMMO SHIPS IN RHODES HARBOUR MYSELF?
WHAT—THESE LIMPET MINES! THE MAJOR MUST HAVE GUESSED THIS MIGHT HAPPEN... YES. LIEUTENANT HASLER, THAT'S JUST WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO!

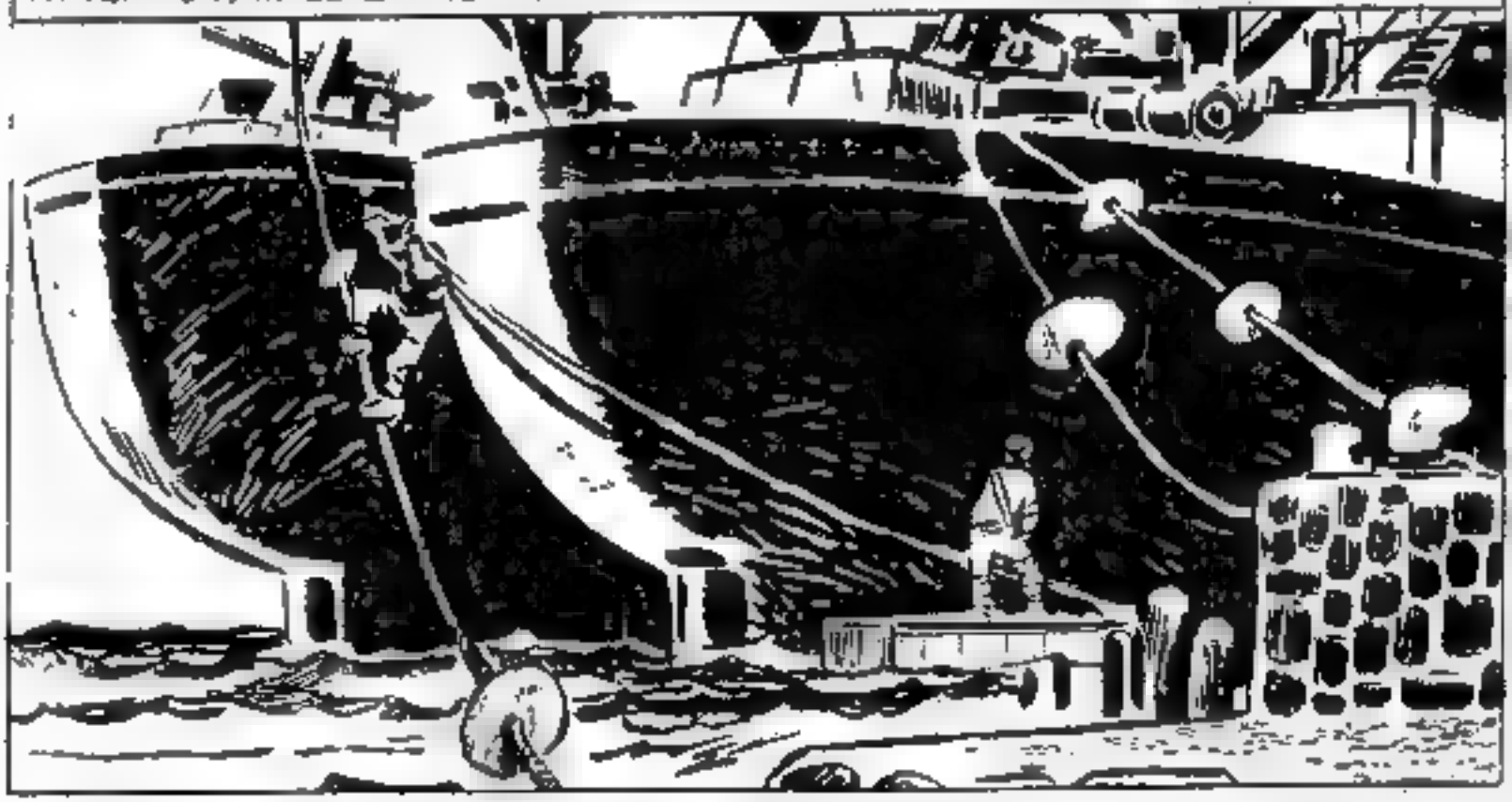
BEFORE HE HAD FINISHED SPEAKING, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING WAS RUNNING FOR THE OPENING IN THE ROCKS THROUGH WHICH THE GERMAN PATROL HAD COME. HASLER WAS CLOSE BEHIND HIM. THEY HAD SIX MILES TO GO . . .
COME ON, HASLER! WITH THE JERRIES LOOKING THE OTHER WAY AND ONLY TWO OF US, WE STAND AN OUTSIDE CHANCE!
I'M GETTING USED TO OUTSIDE CHANCES, FIELDING! LEAD ON!

FOLLOWING THE COASTAL TRACK, THE TWO MEN RAN AT THE FAST AND NOISELESS COMMANDO PACE WHICH DEVOURS THE MILES. AND AS THEY RAN, THE GLARE OF BATTLE IN THE SKY OVER THE HARBOUR TO THE WEST GREW FIERCER. .
IT IS A BRITISH FLEET ATTACKING US FROM THE SEA! QUICKLY, MEN! TO THE BATTERIES!

LIKE SHADOWS, THE TWO LIEUTENANTS WORKED THEIR WAY TO THE HARBOUR ITSELF. THE FEW GERMANS THEY SAW WERE TOO WORRIED ABOUT THE BATTLE RAGING OUTSIDE THE HARBOUR TO NOTICE THEM. MAJOR PERRY'S FLOTILLA OF TORPEDO BOATS WAS HAVING A ROUGH TIME ...

THE TWO BIG CARGO SHIPS WERE TIED UP CLOSE TOGETHER ALONGSIDE THE JETTY. THEY WERE ALREADY LOADED WITH AMMUNITION AND WAITING FOR THE DAWN TIDE TO HEAD FOR TUNIS AND THE DEPLETED STOCKPILES OF FIELD MARSHAL ROMMEL. BUT NOW ...

THE CREWS OF THE TWO AMMUNITION SHIPS WERE CROWDING THE RAIL... BUT IT WAS THE OUTBOARD RAIL. THE SPECTACULAR BATTLE AT SEA HELD THEIR GAPING ATTENTION, WHILE DANGER CREPT UP ON THEM ON NOISELESS FEET..



SENSITIVE HANDS PRESSED THE LIMPET BOMBS TO THE RUSTY IRON PLATES OF THE AMMUNITION SHIPS. QUICK FINGERS SET THE FUSES. THEY WERE SMALL BOMBS, BUT THE EXPLOSIVE STACKED BEHIND THOSE THIN PLATES NEEDED ONLY A SMALL SPARK TO IGNITE IT

NINETY SECONDS LATER, LEUTENANT HASLER SCRAMBLED BACK TO THE JETTY. HE RAN FORWARD TO THE SHIP MOORED AHEAD AND PAUSED. ONE HUNDRED SECONDS . TOO FIELDING CLAMBERED UP TO JOIN HIM. TWENTY SECONDS TO GO

TEN SECONDS AFTER THE FIRST LIMPET BOMB HAD EXPLODED PREMATURELY, THE TWO SHIPS BLEW APART IN A FANTASTIC DETONATION WHICH FLUNG SCREAMING METAL AND FLAME FAR ACROSS THE HARBOUR...

THE TWO BRITISH SABOTEURS WERE ONLY ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY YARDS FROM THAT VICIOUS EXPLOSION, BUT THEY HAD FLUNG THEMSELVES BEHIND A MASSIVE CONCRETE PILL BOX ROOTED INTO THE MOLE. AND AS, SHAKEN AND DEAFENED, THEY LIFTED THEIR HEADS ..

RUN, YOU DOGS! TO THE PUMPS!

IN THE JAGGED LIGHT OF THE FLAMES, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING SAW THAT THE SOLDIERS ON THE MOLE HAD BEEN DRIVEN BACK BY THEIR FRANTIC OFFICERS TO FIGHT THE FIRES RAGING ALONG THE JETTY
THE END OF THE MOLE, HASLER! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE TO REACH THE TORPEDO BOATS!
IT'S A GOOD JOB I CAN SWIM, [redacted]LDING!

EVEN AT THAT DESPERATE MOMENT, RICHARD HASLER'S WRY WORDS JERKED INTO TOD'S MIND, THE SOUR MEMORY OF HIS SUSPICIONS. THEY HAD REACHED THE END OF THE MOLE NOW AND AS TOD REPLIED, THE MAN HE HAD SUSPECTED SEIZED HIS ARM...
YES, HASLER, YOU CAN SWIM... BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT MAKES YOU DO IT AT SUCH ODD TIMES!
NEVER MIND FIELDING... LOOK!

A THOUSAND YARDS OUTSIDE THE HARBOUR, MAJOR ADAM PERRY HAD SEEN THE AMMUNITION SHIPS EXPLODE FROM THE COCKPIT OF H.S.M.T.B. HE HAD GUESSED THAT TWO BRAVE MEN WOULD BE RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES ...

HOP IN, GENTS! THE MAJOR SAYS HE'S HAD ENOUGH OF RHODES, FOR ONE NIGHT.

THE GERMAN DEFENCES HAD STILL NOT RECOVERED FROM THAT TERRIBLE CONCUSSION IN THE HARBOUR. THE TWO CANOES SLID SAFELY OUT TO THE TORPEDO BOAT WAITING BEYOND THE GLARE OF THE FLAMES. AND AS THE TWO LIEUTENANTS CLIMBED ABOARD, MAJOR ADAM PERRY GREETED THEM.

WELL DONE, TOD! AND YOU, LIEUTENANT HASLER! I THINK WE OWE YOU SOME SORT OF APOLOGY, DON'T WE?

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MAJOR! I'VE TAKEN MY IRRITATION OUT ON THE JERRIES!

AS THE TORPEDO BOAT TURNED AWAY, LIEUTENANT TOD FIELDING ASKED THE QUESTION WHICH HAD BEEN PREYING ON HIS MIND FOR THE LAST HOUR ..

SET COURSE FOR BASE, HELMSMAN! FULL AHEAD BOTH!

LOOK, SIR, IF DICKY HASLER HERE ISN'T THE ENEMY AGENT, WHO THE DEVIL ?!

AH, A NICE QUESTION, TOD!

THERE WAS A WRY SMILE ON PERRY'S FACE AS HE LOOKED FROM FIELDING TO HASLER..
YOU REMEMBER ALL THAT EVIDENCE YOU COLLECTED AGAINST THE LIEUTENANT TOO? THE NEATLY TIMED ESCAPE, THE E-BOAT WHICH BUZZED OFF, THE AMBUSH AT SCARPANTO?
DON'T REMIND ME, SIR!

OH, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH THE EVIDENCE, TOO! GOOD SOLID EVIDENCE ALL OF IT! IT POINTED TO THE SPY, AND IT STILL DOES! BUT IT POINTED IN TWO DIRECTIONS AND WE CHOSE THE WRONG ONE!
I'M SORRY SIR, I DON'T GET IT!

THE SPECIAL BOAT SECTION COMMANDER GLANCED BRIEFLY ACROSS AT THE CLUSTER OF MEN FACING HIM. THERE WAS A HARD, GRIM SMILE ON HIS FACE. AND AS HE SPOKE THE ENEMY AGENT ACTED...
YOU SEE, TOO, TWO MEN ESCAPED FROM RHODES THAT NIGHT...
LOOK OUT, MAJOR!

THE MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF ABLE SEAMAN TURNER HAD MOVED VICIOUSLY. BUT EVEN AS HIS PISTOL CAME UP, TOD FIELDING FLUNG HIMSELF INSTINCTIVELY BETWEEN HIS COMMANDING OFFICER AND THE ENEMY AGENT'S BULLET. ONLY THERE WAS NO BULLET...
ACH!

TWICE...THREE TIMES TURNER PULLED THE TRIGGER OF HIS PISTOL BEFORE RICHARD HASLER LEAPED SAVAGELY UPON HIM.
THANKS, TOD! YOU'D HAVE SAVED MY LIFE, THEN ONLY I MADE SURE ABLE SEAMAN TURNER'S PISTOL WAS EMPTY OF BULLETS BEFORE WE LEFT CYPRUS!

TOD FIELDING STARED AT HIS COMMANDING OFFICER.
YOU REALISED THEN THAT HE WAS OUR SPY, SIR?
I WAS MORALLY CERTAIN, THOUGH IT WAS TOO LATE TO CHANGE OUR PLAN. THAT WAS WHY I SLIPPED YOU THE LIMPET BOMBS. I SUDDENLY SAW THAT ALL ALONG WE'D FORGOTTEN THERE WERE TWO MEN WE PICKED UP THAT NIGHT — AND THE EVIDENCE POINTED EQUALLY TO BOTH OF THEM.

LIEUTENANT RICHARD HASLER CAME FORWARD WITH A SUDDEN SMILE ON HIS DARK FACE . . .
NOW I SEE WHY TURNER WAS SO RELUCTANT TO SWIM OUT FROM THE BEACH WITH ME THAT NIGHT. THE JERRIES MUST HAVE HAD A BOAT ALL LINED UP FOR HIM AND ME IN THAT VILLAGE HE WANTED TO GO TO. WE COULD HAVE ROWED OUT IN COMFORT AND STILL HAVE BEEN PICKED UP. NO WONDER HE WAS FED UP.
HUH. THAT SWIM OF YOURS WAS WHAT MADE ME SUSPICIOUS OF YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE, HASLER. I STILL THINK IT WAS MAD.
SBS

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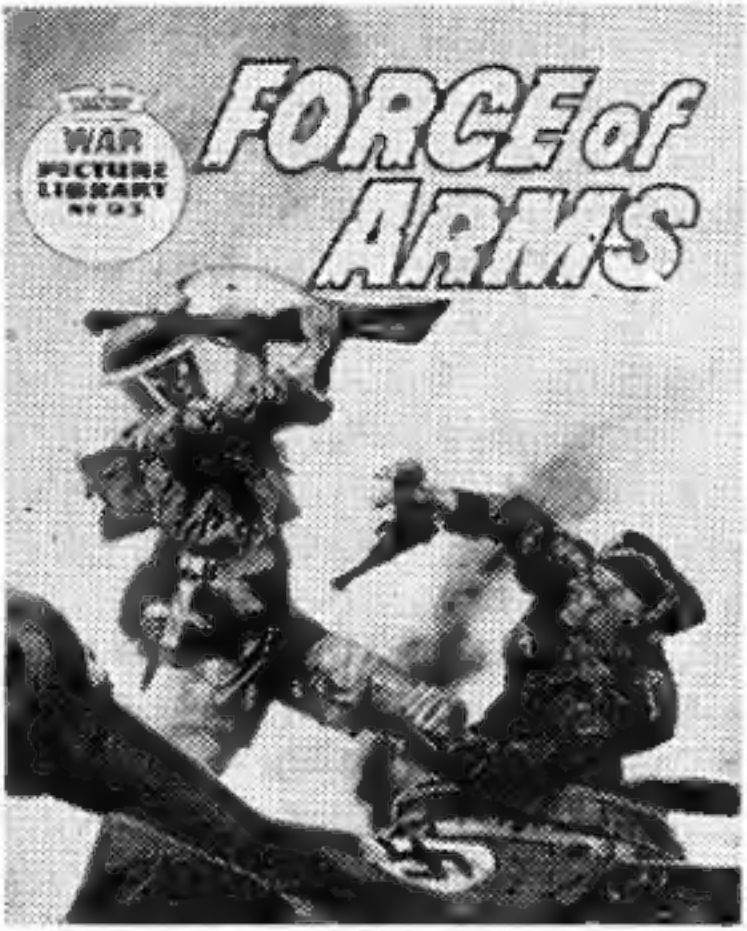

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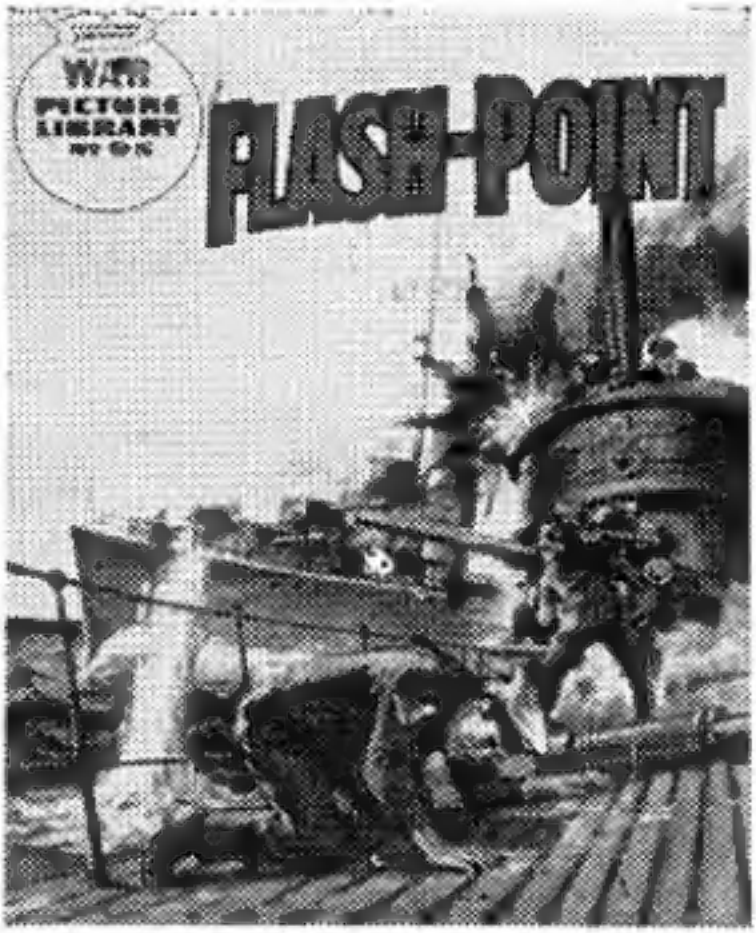

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